

A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

UNDER THE EXALTED CHRIST, THE GOSPEL BEGINS TO SPREAD

THE ACTS

† THE BOOK OF ACTS

OF THE APOSTLES

WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRIES, Associated

An overview of the Book of Acts, by Given O. Blakely

ACTS 5:31-32

"Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him."

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

Lesson # 105

COMMENTARY ON: 28:1-11

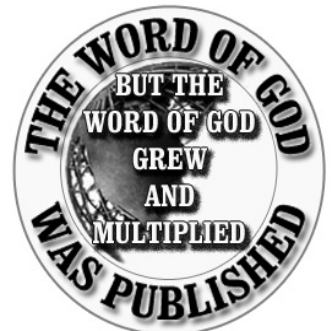
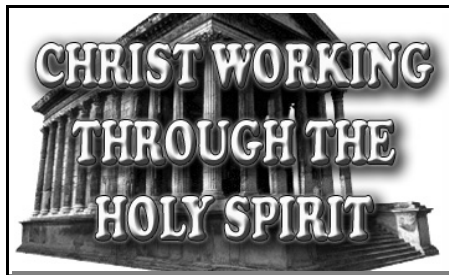
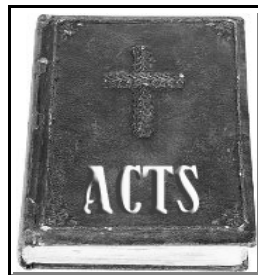
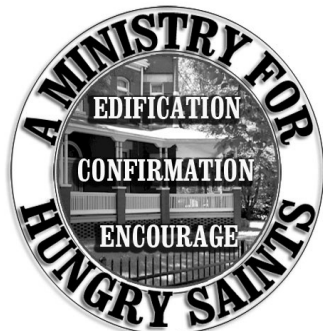
EXPERIENCES ON MELITA

When all of the passengers arrived safely on the island, they found a barbarous people. Yet, the people were inclined to them and treated them graciously. While assisting in the gathering of wood for a fire, Paul is bitten by a poisonous viper. The natives watch him, convinced that he is a murderer and will die. When he does not, they think he is a god. The governor of the island received the travelers into his home for three days, and there Paul finds the leader's father ill. Going in to him, he prayed, laid his hands on him, and healed him. Following this many from the island who had diseases came to Paul, and they also were healed. When they left the governor's home, the people honored them in many ways. When they got ready to depart, the people furnished them with all of the supplies they needed. After three months, apparently spent in some other quarters, and the winter being over, they resumed their journey to Rome in another ship from Alexandria Egypt. God had graciously cared for them.

ACTS 17:26-27

"And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us."

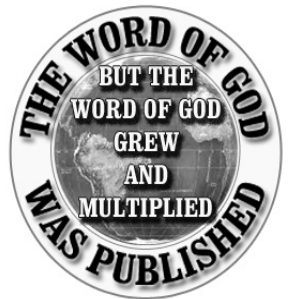
" . . . and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8)



Since May, 1993, a ministry instituted for the encouragement of believers in Christ

The Book of Acts

Lesson Number 105



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST, BY BUILDING THEIR FAITH, ENHANCING THEIR JOY, AND STABILIZING THEIR HOPE, ENABLING THEM TO WORK OUT THEIR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

TRANSLATION LEGEND: ALT=Analytical-Literal Translation (2005), AMPLIFIED=Amplified Bible (1965), ABP=Apostolic Bible Polygot with Greek Interlinear (2003); ASV=American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA=Douay-Rheims (1899), ERV=English Revised Version (1885), ESV=English Stand Version (2001), GNB=Good News (1966), GWN=God's Word (1995), IE= International English (1973), ISV=International Standard Version (1967), JPS=Jewish Publication Society (1917), KJV=King James Version (1611), L.ITV= Literal Translation of the Bible (1976), LIVING=Living Bible (1971), MESSAGE=The Message (1993), MKJV= Modern KJV (1962), MONTGOMERY=Montgomery's New Testament (2001), MRD=Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), NAB=New American Bible (2002), NASB=New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU=New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB=New International Bible, NIV=New International Version (1984), NJB=New Jerusalem Bible (1985), NKJV=New King James Version (1979), NLT=New Living Translation (1996), NRSV=New Revised Standard Version (1989), PHILLIPS=J B Phillips New Testament (1962), PNT=Bishop's New Testament (1595), RSV=Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK=JPS Tanakj (1985), WEB=Webster Bible (1833), WEYMOUTH=Weymouth's New Testament (1903), WILLIAMS=William's New Testament (1937), TYNDALE=Tyndale's Bible (1526), WYCLIFFE=Wycliffe New Testament (1382), YLT =Young's Literal Translation (1862).

GREEK LEXICON LEGEND

LEXICON LEGEND: FRIEBERG = Friberg Lexicon, UBS = UBS Lexicon, LOUW-NIDA = Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT = Liddell Scott Lexicon, THAYER = Thayer's Greek Lexicon, LEH = LEH Lexicon, GINGRICH = Gingrich Lexicon

THE INSPIRED RECORD OF HOW THE ENTHRONED CHRIST, BY MEANS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WORKED THROUGH HIS HOLY APOSTLES AND GODLY MEN, TO SPREAD THE WORD OF THE GOSPEL THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE WORLD, AND TO BRING EDIFICATION AND STABILITY TO MEMBERS OF CHRIST'S BODY.

DISCLAIMER: The quoting of other translations is not to be taken as a condoning of them. My purpose is rather to show the remarkable diversity, and sometimes outright contradictions that exist among these various versions of Scripture. Our understanding of the Word of God ultimately depends upon our comprehension of the Lord Himself and His eternal purpose. Where this understanding is not present, we are shut up to scholasticism and conjecture, both of which are of the world, not of God.

EXPERIENCES ON MELITA

“ 28:1 And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita. ² And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold. ³ And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. ⁴ And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. ⁵ And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. ⁶ Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god. ⁷ In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously. ⁸ And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him. ⁹ So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed: ¹⁰ Who also honored us with many honors; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary. ¹¹ And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux.” (Acts 28:1-11)

INTRODUCTION

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

When all of the passengers arrived safely on the island, they found a barbarous people. Yet, the people were inclined to them and treated them graciously. While assisting in the gathering of wood for a fire, Paul is unexpectedly bitten by a poisonous viper which was hidden in the wood. Because the snake fastened itself on Paul's hand, the whole event was very public, and the natives watched him, convinced that he was a

murderer who was being judged, and would therefore die. When Paul does not, or show any signs of harm whatsoever, they think he is a god. This shows how rapidly the minds of people can change when they honestly consider what they behold. The governor of the island received the travelers into his home for three days, and there Paul finds the leader's father ill. Going in to him, he prayed, laid his hands on him, and healed him. Following this many from the island

who had diseases came to Paul, and they also were healed. When they left the governor's home, the people honored them in many ways. When they got ready to depart, the people furnished them with all of the supplies they needed. After three months, apparently spent in some other quarters, and the winter being over, they resumed their journey to Rome in another ship from Alexandria Egypt. God had graciously cared for them., and has done so through trials

The events taking place on Melita confirm that God's purpose drove this entire experience- by Given O. Blakely

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- PAUL IS BITTEN BY A POISONOUS SNAKE (28:3-5)
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- CONCLUSION

fatigue, challenge, severe tests, losses, lengthy trials, and timely favors.

THE CONTEXT OF LIFE

Life itself is maintained in a certain context, with certain things being involved. For mankind, nothing about the maintenance of life is robot-like, or reflexive. There are dangers and benefits, hurts and comforts, losses and gains. A normal life is maintained through eating, sleeping, and exercise. The mind faces challenges, and the body adverse circumstances. There are periods of elation, and times of sorrows. We face friend and foe, helpers and those who hinder. Our bodies are subject to the elements, and must be nourished by food and water. There is refreshment and fatigue, rejoicing and mourning, heights and depths of emotion. An appetite that is left unassuaged cries out, creating discomfort. All of these, and much more, are simply part of the process of life, and most people know it.

However, when it comes to the maintenance of spiritual life, the knowledge of its manner is not commonly known. In doctrine, insinuation, and mental tone, a myriad people have been left with the impression that spiritual life proceeds on its own, without any involvement from men. It is this persuasion that birthed the heresy referred to as "once saved, always saved." and "eternal security." In these, and other such doctrines, the necessity of faith is conveniently overlooked – the means by which newness of life is both received and maintained. Other things that pertain to "this present evil world," become dominant.

Faith must be "kept" (2 Tim 4:7; Rev 14:12), and not thrown overboard like the cargo on the ship on which Paul and others were sailing (2 Tim 2:18; Acts 27:18,38). Faith, like a mustard seed, grows, advances, and becomes mature (Lk 17:5; 2 Thess 1:3). It must be finished by Jesus as well as authored by Him (Heb 12:2). It is important to be like Abraham, of whom it is written, "being not weak in faith" (Rom 4:19), but rather being "strong in faith" (Rom 4:20).

And how is faith actually maintained? What are the influences that bring it to maturity? Men are, after all, exhorted to "continue in the faith" (Acts 14:22). There are such things as being "established in the faith" (Acts 16:5; Col 2:7), standing "fast in the faith" (1 Cor 16:13), being "grounded and settled" in the faith (Col 1:23), and being "steadfast in the faith" (1 Pet 5:9). Is there a person of sound mind that imagines that men will be wafted into heaven without these qualities being addressed? And what of the admonition to do something with your faith, adding to it certain indispensable traits of rectitude: virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity (2 Pet 1:5-7). Can the promise attached to that activity be experienced without the addition of such things? "For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . if ye do these things, ye shall never fall" (2 Pet 1:8-10). Is this not one of the means by which life is maintained, in order to realize its objective to "bring forth fruit unto God" (Rom 7:4)?

God never intended for spiritual life to be maintained in a moral and spiritual vacuum – where there is little activity, no hostility, and no tests. Instead, it is like Paul's divinely determined voyage to Rome. There are trials of various intensity, aggressive oppositions, and seasons of darkness to endure. **These are all designed to show the validity of the faith one claims to possess.** It is at the time of testing that the absence of faith, of its inadequacy is revealed. Conversely, during the same tests a strong faith is made known that does not

waver or doubt. This is done in the presence of principalities and power in heavenly places who are, in these situations, the ones to whom the "manifold wisdom of God" is being made known (Eph 3:10).

There is a certain separation that takes place during the pilgrimage to glory. Some things have to go in order that other things may be obtained. This matter is addressed in several ways in Scripture.

- ⇨ "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore **cast off** the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light" (Rom 13:12).
- ⇨ "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us **lay aside** every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Heb 12:1).
- ⇨ "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us **cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God**" (2 Cor 7:1).
- ⇨ "That ye **put off** concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts" (Eph 4:22).
- ⇨ "Wherefore **laying aside** all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Pet 2:1-2).

Those en route to glory are especially reminded of these requirements when they are in the midst of moral; and spiritual storms. For the immature, it then becomes more apparent that there are certain hindrances to spiritual progress that must be thrust from us. God has a way of directing our lives so that this can become very obvious. It is then that there is no sense of loss when casting such things out of our lives. That action rather brings refreshment and hope. Vision is clarified, and spiritual senses exercised.

God never intended for spiritual life to be maintained in a moral and spiritual vacuum – where there is little activity, no hostility, and no tests.

TREATED WITH KINDNESS BY A BARBAROUS PEOPLE

“ 28:1 And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita. ² And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold.”

Everyone had made it safely to shore. As it is written, *“And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land”* (Acts 27:44). Now Luke provides some details that confirm the hand of the Lord was with them. Every legitimate need will be met, kindness will be realized from strangers, and an event that would have caused death under any other circumstance will have no power. All of this was the doing of the Lord.

WHEN THEY WERE ESCAPED

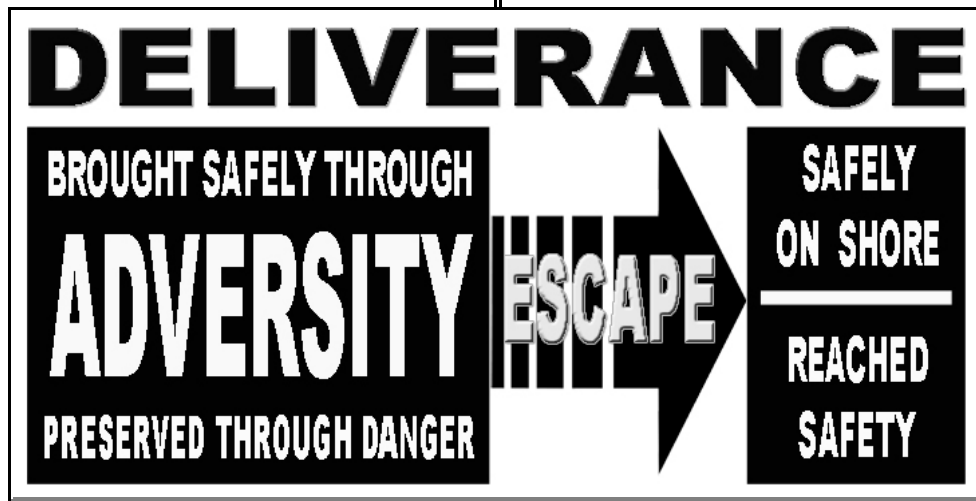
“And when they were escaped . . .” Other versions read, *“and when they had been brought safely through,”* ^{NASB} *“once safely on shore,”* ^{NIV} *“had reached safety,”* ^{NRSV} *“got safe to land,”* ^{DARBY} *“having been saved,”* ^{YLT} *“Our lives having been thus preserved,”* ^{WEYMOUTH} and *“had been rescued,”* ^{WILLIAMS}

the act of deliverance itself. Then there is the objective of the deliverance, which is to **arrive safely** at the appointed destination. No one escapes who is finally overcome by the oppressive environment. No one escapes who does not eventually come out of the situation in which life is threatened. Escape also postulates the safe arrival at a place where the former danger does not exist.

Thus, for those in our text, escaping, or deliverance involved not being destroyed by the storm while they were on the sea. It included the provision of a means to get from the boat to the shore. There was also preservation while they were on their way. Finally, the deliverance included the safe arrival of everyone on the land.

An Application

Having said that, there is an uncomfortable amount of teaching these days that claims deliverance that does not meet these conditions. Those who claim healing that leaves the person with the symptoms of the disease from which he was purportedly healed are among those who teach such absurdities. As if that was not enough, there



The word *“escaped”* is translated from the Greek word *διασωθέντες*. This word means, *“preserve through danger, to bring safe through; to save . . . bring him through . . . keep safe, keep from perishing . . . to save out of danger, rescue,”* ^{THAYER} and *“to rescue completely from danger - ‘to save, to rescue.”* ^{LOUW-NIDA}

There is a lot in this word *“escape.”* It involves being **preserved** in the midst of the circumstance from which one is ultimately delivered. It also includes being **brought out** of a dangerous environment –

are a growing number of religious pretenders who boast of being saved, yet who continue to be dominated by sin.

There a number of deliverances described in Scripture to which these principles can be applied.

⇨ **DELIVERED FROM THIS PRESENT EVIL WORLD.** *“Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will*

of God and our Father” (Gal 1:4).

⇨ **DELIVERED FROM THE LAW.** *“But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter”* (Rom 7:6).

⇨ **ESCAPING FROM TEMPTATION.** *“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it”* (1 Cor 10:13).

⇨ **DELIVERED FROM THE POWER OF DARKNESS.** *“Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son”* (Col 1:13).

⇨ **DELIVERED FROM THE WRATH TO COME.** *“And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come”* (1 Thess 1:10).

⇨ **DELIVERANCE FROM BONDAGE.** *“And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage”* (Heb 2:15).

⇨ **ESCAPING THE CORRUPTION THAT IS IN THE WORLD THROUGH LUST.** *“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust”* (2 Pet 1:4).

⇨ **DELIVERED OUT OF TEMPTATION.** *“The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished”* (2 Pet 2:9)

⇨ **ESCAPED FROM THOSE WHO LIVE IN ERROR.** *“For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error”* (2 Pet 2:18).

⇨ **ESCAPING THE POLLUTIONS OF THE WORLD.** *“For if after they have escaped*

the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning” (2 Pet 2:20).

What would we say of the people who were languishing in the storm, lightening the ship, and having all hope removed from them, if they shouted out, “We have been delivered?” We would consider them to be lacking in perception at the best, and totally dishonest at the worst. And what if they had cried out, “We have escaped,” when the helm of the boat was stuck fast in the sand, and the hinder part of the boat was being dashed to pieces? Or what if while they were making their way to the shore, some swimming, and some on pieces of the ship, relaxed their effort and said, “Finally, we have been saved” – what would we think of such a testimonial? The truth of the matter is that until they arrived safely on that shore, they were in jeopardy, and it was foolish to pretend as though this was not the case.

We have entered an era of Christianity where men feel more free to boast of identity with Christ without showing any indications of escape or deliverance from sin. Now there is a new kind of Christian business that allows for people to maintain their profession of faith, while at the same time confessing to their lives being out of control. It is a most lamentable condition, to say the least, for it sets before the world a kind of salvation that leaves the people essentially the same as those who admittedly are not Christians. Such a salvation is not real, and is not to be recognized as though it was.

THEN THEY KNEW

“ . . . then they knew that the island was called Melita.” Other versions read, “they found out,” ^{NKJV} “we then learned,” ^{NRSV} “we made the discovery that the island was named Melita,” ^{BBE} and “We soon learned.” ^{LIVING}

The text reads as though they had asked the natives the name of the island, and thus the name of it was “learned” – was made known to them.

A Spiritual Application

Due to inferior teaching, as well as to the nature of the beginning of newness of life, **many who come into Christ do not know yet know where they are.** The benefits of being in Christ may not be known, and a clear definition of what has taken place in them may not be discerned. Many of us remember very well when we

FACTS CONCERNING MELITA

Cicero says, here pirates used to winter almost every year, and yet did not spoil the temple of Juno, as Verres did: though some say it was so called from the great abundance of honey found in it; for it was a very pleasant and fruitful island, bringing forth great plenty of wheat, rye, flax, cummin, cotton, figs, wine, roses, thyme, lavender, and many other sweet and delightful herbs, from whence bees did gather great plenty of honey. It was, according to Pliny, distant from Camerina eighty four miles, and from Lilybaeum a hundred and thirteen; and it is said to be distant from the promontory of Sicily an hundred miles, though others say sixty; and that it was so far from Syracuse, which is the next place the apostle came to in this voyage, was from Africa an hundred and ninety miles. On the east side, a little from the chief city of it, now called Malta, was a famous temple of Juno, spoiled by Verres, as before observed; and on the south side another of Hercules, the ruins of both which are yet to be seen. The compass of the island is about sixty miles, the length twenty, and the breadth twelve, and has in it five ports, and about sixty villages. ^{JOHN GILL}

were in just such a state. It took someone who was familiar with life in Christ to give us some perception the lay of the spiritual land, to help us form an adequate perception of the glory of Emmanuel’s land (Isa 8:8).

One can only imagine how foolish it would have been to inquire from some long-time natives of the land what it was called, and where it was, only to have them respond that they did not know. They might have told the people they had been there a long time, but simply had not taken the time to find out where they were, or what resources were there. Anyone confronting such a situation would realize the foolishness of the circumstance. The only justification for being in such a stance would be that the people were blind and deaf, and perhaps did not possess good rational faculties. At any rate, no person of sound mind would expect a long-time citizen of a county to be ignorant of what it was, where it was at, and what was available to its citizens.

Yet, we are faced with countless numbers of professing Christians who have very little understanding of where they are, and of the privileges that have been vouchsafed to those who are “in Christ Jesus.” There is a lot of good work to be done in this area – assisting the saints of God in coming to an understanding of what has taken place in salvation, and the plethora of spiritual resources that are available to them. If you have a lucid view of where you are in Christ Jesus, and of the abundance that is accessible to you, there is certainly a place for you to ministry to many very real

brothers and sisters in Christ who do not yet have this kind of understanding.

THE BARBAROUS PEOPLE

“And the barbarous people . . .” Other versions read, “the natives,” ^{NKJV} “islanders,” ^{NIV} “simple people,” ^{BBE} “local people,” ^{CSB} “the people who lived on the island,” ^{GWN} “local inhabitants,” ^{NET} “the strangers,” ^{PNT} and “the foreigners.” ^{YLT}

Several of the newer versions, in my judgment, give an incorrect translation of the word, making it refer to the habitat of the people (natives, islanders, local people, people who lived on the island, local inhabitants). This is not at all the point of the text, even though the people did live on the island. The word “barbarous” is a transliteration of βάρβαροι (barb aroi). Its etymology includes “foreigner,” ^{STRONG’S} “properly, one whose speech is rude, rough, harsh, as if repeating the syllables . . . one who speaks a foreign or strange language which is not understood by another.” ^{THAYER} “barbarian, foreign, strange; as a substantive non-Greek, uncivilized person, barbarian,” ^{FRIBERG} “non-Greek; uncivilized; foreigner; native,” ^{UBS} and “non-Greek; uncivilized; foreigner; native.” ^{LOUW-NIDA} In no case is it meant to connote a geographical area. This term is set within the context of Greek being the universal language at that time, as well as being separate from the Jews, who had their own language primary language, which was not Greek.

Other texts using this word indicate that it is a cultural term rather than of denoting place or environment.

⇨ **ROMANS 1:14:** “I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise” (Rom 1:14).

⇨ **1 CORINTHIANS 14:11:** “Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me” (1 Cor 14:11).

⇨ **COLOSSIANS 3:11:** “Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all” (Col 3:11).

Hebrew was the language of the Jews, Greek was the universal language, and Latin was the language of the Roman empire. Yet, these people apparently had their own language, not speaking any of those languages. Perhaps this is why there is no record of a single word being spoken by

Paul while he was on this island (Acts 28:1-11). He gathered sticks (28:3), shook a viper off in the fire (28:5), healed the father of Publius (28:8), and healed others of the island who had diseases (28:9). This does not mean there was no preaching and teaching – but if there was, Paul must have spoken in tongues, as Peter and the others did on Pentecost, so the people could understand.

Yet, the people of the island recognized the dilemma of those who had escaped the sinking ship, and treated them with kindness, which itself is a universal language.

Typology Seen in Different Languages

At its root, and in the religious world. There are three different ways of speaking.

- ⇒ There is the language of the world, universally understood by sinners. This is a language those with faith do not choose as their means of communication (1 Cor 2:1-6). Those who are of the world, John wrote, speak *“of the world, and the world heareth them”* (1 John 4:5).
- ⇒ There is religious jargon – the speech of spiritual Babylon. It is an admixture that attempts to mingle the vocabulary of the world with the words taught by the Holy Spirit. It is the language of human tradition (Matt 15:3,6; Col 2:8; 1 Pet 1:18), philosophy (Col 2:8), and attempts to bind law upon people (1 Tim 1:7).
- ⇒ There is also the language that employs words *“taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words”* ^{NASB} (1 Cor 2:13).

To the world, the language taught by the Spirit seems barbaric.

Traditional religious language that has its roots in flesh also appears to the world to be barbaric. Yet there is enough of the world in it for so that it is not altogether strange. To those who *“have the mind of Christ”* (1 Cor 2:16), and *“live by every word of God”* (Lk

4:4), both the language of the world and that of spiritual Babylon is barbaric.

NO LITTLE KINDNESS

“And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness . . .” Other versions read, *“showed us unusual kindness,”* ^{NKJV} *“Showed us extraordinary kindness,”* ^{NASB} *“showed us no common kindness,”* ^{ASV} *“were uncommonly kind to us,”* ^{BBE} *“showed us no small courtesy,”* ^{DOUAY} *“showed us many kindnesses,”* ^{MRD} *“showed us extraordinary hospitality,”* ^{NAB} *“Were very kind to us,”* ^{NLT} *“showed us remarkable kindness,”* ^{WEYMOUTH} and *“showed us unusual and remarkable kindness.”* ^{AMPLIFIED}

Ordinarily hostility exists between

one for them, receiving *“everyone”* of them. In relating why they did this, Luke informs us that it was raining, and was cold, owing to the winter coming on. Other versions read, *“because of the rain that was falling and because of the cold.”* That means the survivors not only made their way to land during a storm, but during rain and coldness as well. They were probably soaked to the bone with frigid waters, and, so far as the record is concerned, the storm was still in progress, probably sending sheets of rain upon them. Also, the waters had been agitated by the storm, and all sorts of filth and contamination were probably on all two hundred and seventy-six of the people.

What a congregation that was! A

In this manner, God provided the immediate needs of all the people. However, in the last analysis, it was really for Paul's sake that this was all done, for he is the one Jesus was sending to Rome. Those who were with him were therefore blessed because of him.

people who do not understand each other – at least some kind of aversion. This was the primary means through which the people in the land of Shinar were scattered *“upon the face of the earth”* (Gen 11:7-9).

In this circumstance, the people were kindly disposed to the people who were not on their island – two hundred and seventy-six of them! Some of these people, probably the majority, were military men. Yet, the natives did not consider their land to have been invaded, or that this large number of people posed a threat to them. Instead, they lavished kindness upon them in various and effective ways.

THEY RECEIVED EVERYONE

“. . . for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold.”

The islanders did not leave it to the survivors to make their own fire, but made

ship pilot, the owner of the ship, a considerable number of sailors, some prisoners, and the brethren that were with Paul. However, the natives made a fire for them all, so they could dry out and be warmed. It was no doubt a sizeable fire, for I cannot imagine a campfire being sufficient to dry out and warm nearly three hundred souls. I assume that it was also built in some sheltered area of either rocks or trees.

In this manner, God provided the immediate needs of all the people. **However, in the last analysis, it was really for Paul's sake that this was all done, for he is the one Jesus was sending to Rome.** Those who were with him were therefore blessed because of him.

The parallel to life in Christ Jesus is so apparent, there is no need for extensive elaboration on the matter. Whatever benefits we receive from God are *“for Jesus' sake,”* and not merely because of who we are. God is no closer us than we are to His Son.

PAUL IS BITTEN BY A POISONOUS SNAKE

“³ And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. ⁴ And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand,

they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. ⁵ And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm."

Even though Paul has been through a harrowing and exhaustive experience, and even though he was a prisoner, yet he joins in the labor to provide warmth to the multitude. His faith has made him considerate, thoughtful, and industrious, and it will do no less in those who are joined to the Lord by their faith.

I want to keep before you the fact that other brethren were with Paul, endured the shipwreck, and made it safely to shore. We do not know precisely how many brethren were traveling with him, but we do know two of them: Luke and Aristarchus (Acts 27:2). It seems to me that this was a most unusual circumstance – for close friends to accompany the transport of a prisoner. Yet, this afforded Paul sustaining companionship along the way.

PAUL GATHERED A BUNDLE OF STICKS

"And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire . . ." Other versions read, *"gathered a pile of brushwood and, as he put it on the fire,"*^{NIV} *"got some sticks together and put them on the fire,"*^{BEB} *"was adding them to the fire,"*^{CJB} *"gathered a certain quantity of sticks together in a bundle and laid it on the fire,"*^{DARBY} *"picked up a pile of sticks for the fire,"*^{IE} *"and thrown them on the fire."*^{MONTGOMERY}

Considering that Paul was noted for his infirmities (2 Cor 11:30; 12:5), this account is all the more remarkable. We do not know if Paul swam to shore, or was one of those riding in on a plank or piece of the ship. Yet, after the fatiguing trip to shore, we find Paul gathering a bundle of sticks for the fire. What an index to his magnanimous character! No task was too lowly for him. That is how faith impacts upon the human character.

The sticks that were gathered required some discretion, for they had to be dry – and it was raining.

THERE CAME A VIPER OUT OF THE HEAT

" . . . there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand . . ." Other versions read, *"a viper came out because of the heat,"*^{NKJV} *"a viper, driven out by the*

heat."^{NIV}

Here was a public event – something that would be noted by everyone present. While doing a good work, assisting in the need of the moment. Paul is bitten by a poisonous snake – not just an ordinary snake, but an especially venomous one. This event will prove to be an effective introduction of Paul to the natives of the island. It will establish that he, not Julius, is the most significant person of the group that has just made it safely to shore. I do not doubt that there were other men who appeared more impressive, stronger, and of more influence. But the mind-set of the group around that fire will now be focused upon Paul the apostle. This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

It is not unusual for a crisis of great magnitude to cause those with strong faith and insight to surface. Those who are defeated by circumstance are not Kingdom leaders, for a true leader takes the people through crises as well as blessings – like Moses, Joshua, David, etc.

ABOUT THE VIPER

"It is said that this remarkable reptile has the biggest and flattest head of all the serpent kind; its usual length is about half an

ell, and its thickness an inch; its snout is not unlike that of a hog; it has sixteen small immovable teeth in each jaw,



Common Viper (Vipera berus).

besides two other large, sharp, hooked, hollow, transparent, canine teeth, situate at each side of the upper jaw, which are those that do the mischief: these are flexible in their articulation, and are ordinarily laid flat along the jaw, the animal never raising them but when it would bite. The roots or bases of these teeth, or fangs, are encompassed with a vesicle or bladder, containing the quantity of a large drop of a yellow insipid salivous juice. – It has only one row of teeth, whereas all other serpents have two; its body is not at all fetid, whereas the inner parts of the bodies of other serpents are intolerable. – It creeps very slowly, and never leaps like other serpents, though it is nimble enough to bite when provoked. – Its body is of two colours, ash coloured or yellow, and the ground speckled with longish brown spots; the scales under its belly are of the color of well polished steel. Its bite is exceeding venomous, and its poison the most dangerous."

CHAMBER'S CYCLOPAEDIA

A "viper" has always been known for its venomous bite. It is noted for being the most "venomous serpent in Northern Africa and South-western-Asia,"^{McCLINTOK & STRONG'S} It is therefore used as a type of spiritually

dangerous people and obnoxious people. John the Baptist referred to certain Pharisees and Sadducees as a "generation of vipers" (Matt 3:7; Lk 3:7). Jesus did the same in regards to the Pharisees (Matt 12:34), and the scribes and Pharisees (Matt 23:33).

In the text before us, one of these particularly poison snakes was driven out of the sticks by the heat of the fire upon which they were placed. The narrative suggests it was in the bundle of sticks that Paul had picked up. When he placed that bundle upon the fire, the viper was forced into the open, and, having bitten Paul, was fastened on his hand. Apparently the many teeth that it had were so embedded in the hand of Paul that the viper could not withdraw itself. This allowed the maximum amount of poison to pass into Paul's body, making the bite especially lethal.

A Lesson to be Learned

Sometimes the very things we are carrying about with us appear to be harmless. Yet, in the heat of spiritual exposure, evil things surface, seeking, to do damage to the individual carrying them.

While this circumstance, like that in which Paul was found, cannot always be avoided, we are to understand that **anything picked up from the earth has the potential of containing harmful influences.** It is only as a person is identified with the Lord and engaged in his work that protection can be granted. Jesus gave an example of this in His words to the seventy whom He sent forth: *"Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you"* (Luke 10:19). His words to His disciples following His resurrection were much the same. *"They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them"* (Mark 16:18). As indicated in our text, this was not something intentionally done to attract the attention of men. It was rather something that would occur while they were engaged in the work of the Lord. This promise was fulfilled in Paul, as well as those who Jesus sent out before him.

THE BARBARIANS SAW

"And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live . . ." Other versions read, *"Undoubtedly this man is a murderer, and though he has been saved from the sea, justice has not allowed him to*

live,^{NASB} *“Doubtless this man is a murderer, for though he has been saved from the sea, Justice [the goddess of avenging] has not permitted that he should live.”* ^{AMPLIFIED}
“Justice hath not suffered him to live,” ^{ASV/NIV/ERV} *not let him go on living,”* ^{BBE}
“Nemesis has not allowed to live,” ^{DARBY}
“Vengeance,” ^{GENEVA/RWB} *“Justice herself,”* ^{NET}
 and *“the goddess of justice.”* ^{CEV}



PAUL IS BITTEN BY A POISONOUS SNAKE

Some of translations indicate that *“Justice”* or *“Vengeance”* was the name of a god, rather than simply the statement of the principle of justice. Some commentators do not see this as a valid point. I am not sure that this is what is intended by the text, but it does make a lot of sense.

ON THE WORD JUSTICE

“The Greek word “Dice” rendered “vengeance”, is the name of a goddess among the Heathens, said to be the daughter of Jupiter and Themis. Apollodorus de Deorum Origin. 50:1. p. 6. Phurnutus de Natura Deorum, p. 80 She is represented as sitting by her father Jupiter; and when anyone does injury to another, informs him of it. She is painted sorrowful, and with a contracted forehead, a grave countenance, and a rough aspect, to strike terror in unrighteous persons, and give confidence to righteous ones, agreeably to her name, which signifies “justice”. This deity the barbarians supposed pursued Paul; and though she let him escape the sea, she will not suffer him to live any longer; for they looked upon the viper’s fastening on him, as to be sent by her, so to be immediate death to him.” ^{JOHN GILL}

These islanders had a sense of morality and accountability that is nearly defunct in our country. Even within the professed church, there is a glaring absence of the perception of strict accountability and Divine retribution. Joseph’s brothers thought of this when they confronted Joseph years after they had sold him (Gen 42:21-22). The sailors on the ship in which Jonah fled from the presence of the Lord considered the fierce storm they were facing as having been

brought on because of someone who did wrong (Jonah 1:7,14).

AN ASPECT OF THE DIVINE NATURE

Of course, there is more to the matter of retribution than the intuitions and traditions of men. God has revealed that He repays. To Moses He revealed, *“Know therefore that the LORD thy God, He is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations; and repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face”* (Deut 7:9-10). Isaiah affirmed, *“According to their deeds, accordingly He will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompense to His enemies; to the islands He will repay recompense”* (Isa 59:18). Apostolic doctrine affirms, *“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord”* (Rom 12:19).

This is God’s nature, and, from the very beginning, has been revealed in the Scriptural record in His dealings with men.

- ⇒ The sin of Adam and Eve (Gen 2:17; 3:16-19).
- ⇒ The sin of Cain (Gen 4:10-12).
- ⇒ The world of Noah’s day (Gen 6:3-7).
- ⇒ The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18:20; 19:13,24-25).
- ⇒ Israel (Ex 32:34; Psa 95:11).
- ⇒ Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10).
- ⇒ Herod (Acts 12:23).

In these few examples, we see that this aspect of the Divine nature was revealed at the beginning of time, before the Law, during the Law, and after the Law – even during the day of salvation.

It appears that a sense of this is built into the Divine imagery that is within mankind. There is a sense of Divine retribution resident in the conscience of men. Admittedly, this can be ignored and even subdued, as is evidenced in our time. That, of course, compounds the problem.

Salvation is a means provided by God to address this aspect of His nature. Sin was atoned for by God visiting the iniquity of

humanity in the Person of Christ, upon whom the sins of the world were laid. To ignore that provision will cause one to incur the wrath of God *“without mixture”* (Rev 14:10).

HE SHOOK OFF THE BEAST

“And he shook off the beast into the fire . . .” Other versions read, *“But Paul shook the snake off into the fire,”* ^{NIV} and *“Then [Paul simply] shook off the small creature into the fire.”* ^{AMPLIFIED}

There is a calmness in Paul’s reaction that is baffling to the flesh. The text conveys no idea of crisis or fear. The Amplified Bible captures this sense by reading *“Then [Paul simply] shook off the small creature into the fire.”*

However, note **where** he *“shook off”* the viper. This was a very deliberate act, for he shook of the snake *“into the fire,”* where it could be the more easily destroyed. He did not shake it off at random, so it could bite someone else. Paul was, indeed, thinking and acting with a sound and considerate mind.

AND FELT NO HARM

“. . . and felt no harm.” Other versions read, *“suffered no ill effects,”* ^{NIV} *“he got no damage,”* ^{BBE} *“suffered no evil,”* ^{YLT} *“was not hurt,”* ^{IE} *“suffered no evil effects,”* ^{AMPLIFIED} *“without being harmed at all,”* ^{GNB} and *“none the worse for wear.”* ^{MESSAGE}

Consider what was against Paul not being harmed. He was probably in a physically weakened state after coming safely to shore. The viper was an especially poisonous snake. The snake had fastened itself on Paul’s hand, probably emptying the maximum amount of venom into the apostle. Yet, so far as the condition of Paul was concerned, it was as though the event had never even taken place. There were no immediate or after-effects of the bite. There were no symptoms of a snake-bite, unless it be fang marks in his hand.

A SPIRITUAL PARALLEL

It is possible for the people of God to endure very real afflictions without there being any observable evidence of them.

- ⇒ When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out of the fiery furnace it is written of them, *“upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them”* (Dan 3:27).

⇒ When Daniel came out of the lion's den, there was no indication that he had ever been in such an environment. As it is written, **"So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God"** (Dan 6:23).

While we are not guarantee we will always surface from trials without any evidence that we have been in them, such a condition is possible. Jesus promised His

disciples, **"And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover"** (Mark 16:17-18). **I understand that this is not a guarantee that we will never be harmed, but it is something we may very well experience at the Lord's discretion.**

Paul did not always surface from trials with no evidence he had been in them. Speaking of some of the things he had endured for Jesus' sake, he wrote: **"I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus"** (Gal 6:17). These were marks that could be seen. They were in his body. He carried these marks with him wherever he went, and they could be seen by others. **However, the snake-bite on Melita was not such an occasion. There was no evidence of harm upon him.**

PAUL'S CONDITION IS NOTED BY THE PEOPLE

"6 Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god."

To this point, the natives had observed the viper clinging to Paul's hand, concluding that he was being punished for being a murderer. However, the event had not yet been concluded. They continued to observe Paul to see the outcome of it all.

HE SHOULD HAVE SWOLLEN

"Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly . . ." Other versions read, **"they were expecting that he would swell up or suddenly fall down dead,"** NKJV **"were expecting that he was about to swell up or suddenly fall down dead,"** NASB and **"they had the idea that they would see him becoming ill, or suddenly falling down dead."** BBE

Evidently, these people had no doubt witnessed others being bitten by a viper, and knew the sure results that would take place. They made no attempt to treat the bite, for it was evidently known that any bite from such a snake was lethal, and death would follow shortly. Therefore, they just waited for the anticipated results, unable to do anything to correct or neutralize the situation. This was a moment when, so far as they were concerned, human wisdom was totally useless. What had taken place put them into a situation where intellectuality and every form of the wisdom of men had been excluded – totally shut out.

THEY LOOKED A GREAT WHILE

" . . . but after they had looked a great

while, and saw no harm come to him . . ." Other versions read, **"But after they had waited a long time and had seen nothing unusual happen to him,"** NASB **"but when they had waited a long time and saw no misfortune come to him,"** RSV **"but when they were long in expectation and beheld nothing amiss come to him,"** ASV **"but after they had looked a great while, and saw no inconvenience come to him,"** GENEVA and **"but when they had watched him a long time and saw nothing fatal or harmful come to him."** AMPLIFIED

It ought to be noted here that due attention is paid to professing Christians during the times of trial – times when the world knows how it would react. **When, in times of crisis and sorrow, the same kind of reactions are seen in Christians as those seen among unbelievers, a certain reproach is brought upon God.** That is why Paul spoke of the reaction of believers to the death of their companions in Christ. **"But I would not have you to be**

Amidst the sorrow, lament, and tears that are brought on by the death of brethren in Jesus, the candle of hope is still aglow. We do not sorrow as though there is no hope.

How long they waited is stated in general terms – **"a great while."** It was probably in terms of a few hours. They looked for some of the signs that accompanied a bite from such a viper. The beginning of such signs would assure them that the bite was, in fact, lethal. However, there was not the faintest sign or indication that Paul had even been bitten by a poisonous snake. There was no soreness, no redness, and no dissipation of strength: no vomiting, no pain, no change in the color of Paul's skin, and no sweat. Yet, there was no doubt that he had been bitten by a viper, for they had seen the snake fastened to his hand, remaining there until Paul had shaken it off in the fire. They were witnessing something that, according to their firm persuasion, only a god could do. These results were not possible within the circumference of human strength and wisdom, and they knew it.

A Spiritual Application

ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope" (1 Thess 4:13). There is sorrow at the passing of members of the body of Christ, to be sure. However, it is sorrow of another sort – a sorrow that is totally unknown to the world.

Amidst the sorrow, lament, and tears that are brought on by the death of brethren in Jesus, the candle of hope is still aglow. We do not sorrow as though there is no hope. However, those who struggle through the death of their brethren without the evidence of hope do greatly err. They are leaving a witness that mitigates anything they may have to say about Christ, the Bible, or believing God. If Jesus could say to the widow of Nain as she marched in the funeral procession of her own son, **"Weep not"** (Lk 7:13), what must He say to those who have lost someone close to them who is in Christ Jesus? He said the very same words – **"Weep**

The events taking place on Melita confirm that God's purpose drove this entire experience– by Given O. Blakely

not” – to those we mourned the death of Jairus’ twelve year old daughter (Lk 8:52). And why did He say such words? **It is because there was hope!** For those to whom He spoke, that hope would be realized immediately. But whether immediate or not, hope can wait expectantly. Hope can ignite rejoicing in what will yet take place (Rom 12:12), even though the individual may weep “for a night” (Psa 30:5).

Death is only one circumstance in which those who are of the world crumble and fall in discouragement. **Any trial encountered by a believer that is also common to those who are of this world ought to be accompanied by the distinguishing response or faith and hope.** Where these are not obvious a spiritual swelling and redness takes place that contradicts the claim of faith. This is a sobering reality, and worthy of much consideration. In my judgment, there is far

too much worldly response to difficulties that is found among professing believers. It has had a profound effect upon the unbelievers who have heard the profession of faith. This is especially true when professing Christian leaders invent doctrines that justify such responses, affirming that they are common to all believers.

THEY CHANGED THEIR MINDS

“... they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.” Other versions read, “changing their opinion, they said he was a god,”^{BBE} “they reversed their opinion and said he was a god,”^{CJB} “they changed their language, and said, that he was a god,”^{MRD} “they changed their minds and kept saying over and over that he was a god,”^{AMPLIFIED} and “they jumped to the conclusion that he was a god!”^{MESSAGE}

Although this was a wrong conclusion, it was driven by the persuasion

that Deity does exist. There was no question in the minds of these natives concerning the reality of God. They certainly had not embraced the philosophy of the fool who affirms, “There is no God” (Psa 14:1; 53:1).

This was the same conclusion reached by those in Lystra when they witnessed Paul heal a man who had been “a cripple from his mother’s womb.” Barnabas and Saul aborted their attempts to offer sacrifices to them with insightful words (Acts 14:8-18). However, there is no record of such effort being expended here. I gather this was because the natives made no effort to make sacrifice to Paul. Also, whereas Paul and Barnabas left Lystra, Paul was going to remain on the island of Melita for three months. That altered the whole situation. He would be given time to confirm the true nature of what had happened, and to clarify the reality of the living God. Much of this would be done by example.

HOSPITALITY AND AN ACT OF MERCY

“7 In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously. 8 And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him.”

The care of the Lord for His own

The care of the Lord for His own will now be manifested. He will use a barbarous people to take care of Paul and his companions. These people have already seen that Paul was no ordinary man. Now they will learn that the presence of him and all of the people with him will pose no threat to their island.

will now be manifested. He will use a barbarous people to take care of Paul and his companions. These people have already seen that Paul was no ordinary man. Now they will learn that the presence of him and all of the people with him will pose no threat to their island. No attempt will be made to take over the environment or abuse the people. In fact, help will be ministered to them in the name of the Lord.

From this text throughout their duration on the island, there will not be a solitary word mentioned about the ship pilot, the owner of the ship, the sailors, Julius the centurion, the soldiers, or the prisoners. The text reads as though the only people present were Paul and those aligned with him.

And why is this so? **Because, from heaven’s point of view, they were the principle occupants of the island.**

The activities of Melita will now center around Paul the apostle.

POSSESSIONS OF THE CHIEF MAN

“In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously . . .” Other versions read, “In that region there was an estate of the leading citizen of the

island, whose name was Publius, who received us and entertained us courteously for three days,”^{NKJV} “Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the leading man of the island, named Publius, who welcomed us and entertained us courteously three days,”^{NASB} and “In the vicinity of that place there were estates belonging to the head man of the island, named Publius, who accepted and welcomed and entertained us with hearty hospitality for three days.”^{AMPLIFIED}

Publius is described as “the chief man of the island,” the “leading man,”^{NASB} or the “head man of the island.”^{AMPLIFIED} It is generally understood that this man was the “deputy,”^{KJV} “proconsul,”^{NASB} “ruler,”^{BBE} or “governor”^{BBE} of the island, as Sergius Paulus was of Cyprus (Acts 13:7). This man was evidently a man of unusual means, as the reference to his “possessions,” or “estates,”^{AMPLIFIED} indicates.

For three days this man considerably lodged Paul and company. There is a divergence of opinion here concerning who is intended by the words “us.” Some are of the opinion that it was “the centurion, St. Paul, St. Luke, Aristarchus, and possibly one or two others, but not the whole two hundred and seventy-six.”^{PULPIT COMMENTARY} Others conclude, “this was a very considerable instance of humanity and hospitality, to receive so many strangers at

once into his houses, as two hundred three score and sixteen; and give them food and lodging, for three days together, and that in such a kind, friendly, and cheerful manner." JOHN GILL

It appears to me that there is no point of mentioning the many possessions of Publius if he only entertained four or five people. That does not seem to fit well into the account Luke is giving. Further, if this man did not entertain the entire group, what point is there in mentioning "three days" of courteous treatment. How could it be virtuous for a man of such means to house less than two percent of the people who were stranded on the island he governed? I rather prefer to see this as Publius taking care of all of the people for three days, supposing that during that time they could find suitable lodging for the group for the next three months. The maintenance of prisoners during the winter, it seems to me, would require special provisions that were not readily available in the estate of Publius.

This is a classic example of the principle taught in Hebrews 13:2: "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." While this particular text is not speaking of entertaining angels, Publius did not know the manner of man Paul was, nor was he aware of the true natures of Luke and Aristarchus. Yet, under Divine compulsion, he cared for people he had never met before, and with whom he had no knowledge other than their shipwreck and Paul's encounter with a viper.

The Virtue of Hospitality

We live in a day when hospitality is not common. Many professed believers have never offered their homes as a haven to anyone except themselves and their family. However, hospitality is a godly virtue.

- ⇒ Apostolic doctrine admonishes believers to be "given to hospitality" (Rom 12:12).
- ⇒ A "bishop" or "elder" is to be one who is "given to hospitality" (1 Tim 3:2). He is even to be described as "a lover of hospitality" (Tit 1:8).
- ⇒ One of the qualifications for a widow to be regularly supported by the church is, "if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints feet" (1 Tim 5:10).
- ⇒ Solemnly, the saints are admonished, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have

entertained angels unawares" (Heb 13:2).

- ⇒ Peter admonishes, "Use hospitality one to another without grudging" (1 Pet 4:9).

In this text, Publius was hospitable, and during the time Paul was with him, his father was graciously healed.

THE FATHER OF PUBLIUS

"And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux . . ." Other versions read, "And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery,"^{NKJV} "And it came about that the father of Publius was lying in bed afflicted with recurrent fever and dysentery,"^{NASB} "And the father of Publius was ill, with a disease of the stomach,"^{BBE} and "And it happened that the father of Publius was sick in bed with recurring attacks of fever and dysentery."^{AMPLIFIED}

The words "bloody flux" are translated from the Greek word *δυσεντερία*, which is transliterated "dusentario." or "dysentery." The lexical meaning of this word is, "as an infectious intestinal disease dysentery,"^{FRIBERG} and "as an infectious intestinal disease dysentery,"^{LOUW-NIDA} The English word "dysentery" is defined as "a disease characterized by severe diarrhea with passage of mucus and blood and usually caused by infection."^{MERRIAM-WEBSTER}

The language of the text indicates this was an ongoing, or reoccurring, disease,^{NASB/AMPLIFIED} resulting in the man being confined to a bed.

Paul Entered In

Note the confidence of the apostle. He "went to see" the man, entering into the place where he laid sick and dissipated. He apparently did not wonder whether or not he should do this, but appeared constrained to do so. Even though he had escaped from a storm over which he had no control, yet he did not hesitate to enter into this open door.

During His earthly ministry, when Jesus had sent out the twelve, He spoke of a person and their house being worthy. "And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is **worthy**; and there abide till ye go thence. And when ye come into an house, salute it. And if the house be **worthy**, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you" (Matt 10:11-13). Publius and the house in which he dwelt were certainly worthy. He had received Paul and company courteously, supplying their needs and a place to stay for three days. Now, Paul will bring a blessing to his house.

Paul Prayed

The absolute dependence of those early saints upon the Lord is revealed in the times and nature of their prayers.

- ⇒ When choosing a replacement for Judas (Acts 1:24).
- ⇒ When threatened by the Jewish leaders (Acts 4:31).
- ⇒ When setting apart those who had charge of the daily distribution to the believing widows (Acts 6:6).
- ⇒ When Peter and John prayed that the

Note the confidence of the apostle. He "went to see" the man, entering into the place where he laid sick and dissipated. He apparently did not wonder whether or not he should do this, but appeared constrained to do so.

PAUL HEALED HIM

" . . . to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him." Other versions read, "Paul went in to see him and, after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him,"^{NIV} "Paul visited him and cured him by praying and putting his hands on him,"^{NRSV} and "Paul went to see him, and after praying and laying his hands on him, he healed him."^{AMPLIFIED}

Samaritans would receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:15).

- ⇒ When Peter raised Dorcas from the dead (Acts 9:40).
- ⇒ When the church in Antioch sent forth Barnabas and Saul, after being instructed by the Spirit to do so (Acts 13:3).

The events taking place on Melita confirm that God's purpose drove this entire experience- by Given O. Blakely

- ⇒ When Paul and Barnabas ordained elders in every church (Acts 14:23).
- ⇒ When Paul and Silas were in prison (Acts 16:25).
- ⇒ When Paul left the elders from Ephesus (Acts 20:36).
- ⇒ When Paul left the brethren and families in Tyre (Acts 21:5).

Now, in a display of dependence upon the Lord, Paul prays concerning the father of Publius.

Paul Laid His Hands on the Man

The laying of hands upon the sick was practiced by the Lord Jesus Himself (Mk 6:5; 7:32-34; Lk 4:40; 5:15). When He sent out His disciples to preach the Gospel to every creature, He said certain signs would follow those who believe. One of them was, *“they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover”* (Mk 16:18). There was even an occasion when *“God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them”* (Acts 19:11-12).

There is no need to attempt to establish that the laying on of hands was

him to stand up (Acts 14:9-10). In this case, Paul prayed, laid his hands on the man, and healed him.

It ought to be obvious that there is not a certain procedure that is common in all healing. Some people were apparently never healed of their infirmities – like Paul (2 Cor 11:30; 12:5) and Timothy (1 Tim 5:23).

It is enough to say that healing, like all other spiritual gifts, is traced back to the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:4). Such gifts are administered by the Lord (1 Cor 12:5). It is God who works them wherever they are found (1 Cor 12:5). There is a diversity of operations found in these gifts, but the same God works in them all (1 Cor 12:6). The purpose of all of these gifts is the *“profit”* of all of the members of the body (1 Cor 12:7). *“Gifts of healing”* is one of these gifts, and it is *“by the same Spirit”* (1 Cor 12:9).

Questions about whether or not people can be healed are all foolish. Healing has always been at the discretion of the Lord, and there were even some places where none, or only a very limited number, of this type of miracle could be done (Mk 6:5).

Paul maintained his life so that should the Lord have a work of this kind to do, he was available and suitable to be the

urged His people to let their *“requests be made known unto God”* (Phil 4:6). If that requests is for the miraculous intervention of God in the life and affairs of men, it is not to be subdued. If it was not proper to ask for such things, God certainly would not guarantee that His peace would keep their hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Phil 4:7). It is still true, *“all things are possible to him that believeth”* (Mk 9:23), and *“The things which are impossible with men are possible with God”* (Luke 18:27).

Paul Healed the Man

The text is clear in what it states. Paul *“healed him.”* The one who prayed *“healed him.”* The one who laid his hands on Publius’ father *“healed him.”* Like Peter, Paul could say *“why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?”* (Acts 3:12). We understand that it was the exalted Christ who did this – but He did it through His servant Paul. That is the point Luke is making.

When Jesus, prior to dying and being raised from the dead, send out the twelve, He said to them, *“Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give”* (Mat 10:8). It is understood that *“He gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of disease”* (Matt 10:1). Not limiting such power to the twelve, the Lord also sent out *“other seventy also”* – that is, in addition to the twelve, and at another time. When these men returned, they confessed, *“even the demons are subject to us in Your name.”* Jesus explained why this was the case. *“Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you”* (Luke 10:17-19).

Later, after Jesus had ascended into glory, *“Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people”* (Acts 6:8). I realize that some declare this was because the apostles laid hands on him, transferring, as it were, the power to do such things. However, the Word of God does not say this. It rather says they were brought to the apostles to be *“appointed”* over the work of administration, at which time they *“prayed”* and *“laid their hands on them”* (Acts 6:6). However, Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit before the apostles laid hands on him (Acts 6:5).

Later, Philip did *“miracles”* in the city of Samaria. It is written of that occasion,

It ought to be obvious that there is a not a certain procedure that is common in all healing. Some people were apparently never healed of their infirmities – like Paul (2 Cor 11:30; 12:5) and Timothy (1 Tim 5:23).

intended to be a consistent action that accompanied the healing of the sick. James spoke of praying over, and anointing the sick with oil (James 5:14). At the direction of the Lord, the prophet Isaiah used *“a lump of figs”* to heal a dangerous boil (2 Kgs 20:7; Isa 38:21). Jesus healed the servant of a certain centurion by simply speaking a word (Matt 8:13). One woman was healed by touching His clothing (Mk 5:27-29). Other sick people sought to touch Jesus Himself, and when they did, virtue went out from Him, and they were healed (Lk 6:17-19). Some lepers were healed by Jesus as they went to show themselves to the priest (Lk 17:14-15). Paul healed an impotent man who was cripple from his mother’s womb by simply telling

vessel through which it was accomplished. That, in my judgment, is to be the stance of the believer – to be *“prepared unto every good work.”* or *“prepared to do any good work”*^{NIV} (2 Tim 2:21).

When you are addressing the matter of Divine expression, it is not wise to think of it in terms of a limited period of time, or only in association with certain regions. Those of any age do well to remember *“the mighty acts of God”* (Psa 106:2; 145:4,12; 150:2). **It is a grievous transgression to attempt to deprive the people of God of the persuasion that God can and does work in a manner that is transcendent to nature.** God has

“And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city” (Acts 8:6-8).

The gifts God put in the church includes *“the working of miracles”* and *“gifts of healing.”* These are mentioned in the same breath with *“the word of wisdom,” “the word of knowledge,” “faith,” “prophecy,” “the discerning of spirits,” “teachers,”* and

“governments” (1 Cor 12:10,28-29). The point here is that it is exceedingly difficult to sweep aside *“spiritual gifts”* as though they were limited to a certain period of time. This is particularly true in view of the mentioning of them in other apostolic writings. Ephesians 4:11 mentions *“gifts,”* including *“evangelists, pastors and teacher.”* The twelfth chapter of Romans also mentioned gifts, including *“ministering,”* or serving, ^{NIV} *“exhorting,” “giving,” “ruling,”* and *“showing mercy”* (Rom 12:6-8). Peter also refers to the *“gifts,”* including *“speaking,”* and *“ministering”* or serving (1 Pet 4:10-11). With the exception of the apostles, I do not

believe contends for the cessation of these.

In all of these gifts, the point is not their miraculous nature, but the contribution they make to the people of God. To speak of them as nothing more than a passing fad is to open the door for unbelief, and make life even more difficult for the saints than it already is. If someone responds that they will pass away, we acknowledge this to be true. But faith and hope will also pass away, giving way to the obtaining of the things for which we both long and hope. These things are in the hands of the Lord, and we must view them in that way.

GRACIOUS BENEFITS FOR ALL THE PEOPLE

“⁹ So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed.”

The healing of the father of Publius was a kind of spiritual catalyst that quickly spread throughout the island.

WHEN THIS WAS DONE

“So when this was done . . .” Other versions read, *“after this had happened,”* ^{NASB} *“when this had taken place,”* ^{RSV} *“after this,”* ^{CSB} *“after this event,”* ^{MRD} *“this, therefore, being done,”* ^{YLT} *“after this occurred,”* ^{IE} *“because this cure was performed,”* ^{WILLIAMS} and *“This, then, having taken place.”* ^{ABP}

A lot of, for want of a better expression, contemporary Christianity is really nothing more than talk. Men banter back and forth about ideas, interpretations, and philosophies, without much of the truth of God being lived out. In distinction to this circumstance, our text speaks of something that was *“done”* – something that was externalized, and made visible to the sons of men.

Jesus spoke to His disciples about *“good works”* that could be **seen** (Matt 5:16). It is also interesting to note that the expression *“good works”* is never used in a derogatory or unprofitable manner (Matt 5:16; 26:10; Mk 14:6; John 10:32,33; Acts 9:36; Rom 13:3; 2 Cor 9:8; Eph 2:10; Phil 1:6; Col 1:10; 1 Tim 2:10; 3:1; 5:10; 6:18; 2 Tim 2:21; 3:17; Tit 1:16; 2:7,14; 3:1,8,14; Heb 10:24; 13:21; 1 Pet 2:12). In the KJV, NKJV, NASB, NIV, NRSV, and RSV there is only one use of the expression *“good work”* from Genesis through Malachi. It is found in Nehemiah 2:18, where Nehemiah affirmed

the Lord had strengthened the hand of the people to do a *“good work.”*

The era of the New Covenant is one of godly doing! With hearts made new, the laws of God written upon the heart, and the Holy Spirit living within, men have been equipped to **do** righteousness, not simply talk about it. Furthermore, when good is **done**, and righteousness expressed, it provides an environment in which the Lord can work for His own glory.

OTHERS ALSO

“. . . others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed.” Other versions read, *“the rest of those on the island who had diseases also came and were healed,”* ^{NKJV} *“the rest of the people on the island who had diseases were coming to him and getting cured,”* ^{NASB} *“other also in the Isle, which had diseases, came to him, and were healed,”* ^{GENEVA} *“other sick people on the island went to Paul and were made well,”* ^{GWN} *“the other people on the island who had diseases also kept coming and were cured,”* ^{AMPLIFIED} *“began to come to Paul. Paul healed them, too,”* ^{IE} *“the other sick*

people on the island came, and continued to be restored to health,” ^{MONTGOMERY} and *“having sicknesses in the land came forward, and were cured.”* ^{ABP}

The word of the healing of Publius’ father quickly spread, and those on the island who had diseases came, and all of them were healed. This is obviously something to which they were not accustomed, for false gods cannot do such things. The clear insinuation of the verse is that everyone that came was healed – all who extended themselves to get to Paul were blessed with being made well. **Note that the people came to Paul, as opposed to others bringing them.**

Further, the language indicates continuity – they kept on coming, probably in droves from various parts of the island. This island is seventeen miles in length, and nine to ten miles in breadth. ^{MCLINTOK & STRONG’S} That makes it an area of about 170 square miles. It was located about sixty miles from Sicily, and was a kind of crossroads for those traveling by sea. What was done in this island could easily be made known over an extensive

When diseased people from all over this island came to Paul and were healed, the word must have quickly spread. Also, there was at least one other ship docked on the island at this time, and may very well have been others. That made the potential for making this work done very large.

The events taking place on Melita confirm that God’s purpose drove this entire experience– by Given O. Blakely

territory, ranging from Asia to Africa, and Italy. When diseased people from all over this island came to Paul and were healed, the word must have quickly spread. Also, there was at least one other ship docked on the island at this time, and may very well have been others. That made the potential for making this work done very large.

Throughout Scriptural history, there have been a number of mass healings. During the plague of the serpents, with great numbers of people being bitten, *“everyone that was bitten”* was promised they would live if they looked upon a brazen serpent that Moses was commanded to make. It came to pass that *“if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived”* (Num 21:9). We have no idea how many people were healed/ However, in light of the fact that *“much people of Israel died”* before the Moses made the serpent (Num 21:6), it must have been a large number. This was by no means a common occurrence.

diseases brought them unto Him; and He laid His hands on every one of them, and healed them” (Luke 4:40).

- ⇨ *“And the whole multitude sought to touch Him: for there went virtue out of Him, and healed them all”* (Luke 6:19).
- ⇨ *“And the people, when they knew it, followed Him: and He received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing”* (Luke 9:11).
- ⇨ *“Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them”* (Acts 5:15).
- ⇨ *“There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem,*

the men was about five thousand” (Acts 4:4).

- ⇨ *“And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women”* (Acts 5:14).
- ⇨ *“And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith”* (Acts 6:7).
- ⇨ *“Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city”* (Acts 8:5-8).

All of this is a picture of an even greater healing of the soul (Psa 41:4). Bodily healings are not to compared with occasions when multitudes of people believed on Jesus and were delivered from the guilt and power of sin.

However, commensurate with the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, such things happened with alarming frequency.

- ⇨ *“And His fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto Him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and He healed them”* (Matt 4:24).
- ⇨ *“When the even was come, they brought unto Him many that were possessed with devils: and He cast out the spirits with His word, and healed all that were sick”* (Matt 8:16).
- ⇨ *“But when Jesus knew it, He withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all”* (Matt 12:15).
- ⇨ *“Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers*

bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one” (Acts 5:16).

- ⇨ *“And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them”* (Acts 19:11-12).

MASS CONVERSIONS

All of this is a picture of an even greater healing of the soul (Psa 41:4). Bodily healings are not to compared with occasions when multitudes of people believed on Jesus and were delivered from the guilt and power of sin.

- ⇨ *“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about0 three thousand souls”* (Acts 2:41).
- ⇨ *“Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of*

- ⇨ *“Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied”* (Acts 9:31).
- ⇨ *“And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord”* (Acts 9:35).
- ⇨ *“And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord”* (Acts 11:21).
- ⇨ *“But the word of God grew and multiplied”* (Acts 12:24).
- ⇨ *“And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed”* (Acts 14:1).
- ⇨ *“And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few”* (Acts 17:4).

That is the kind of power that is resident in the Gospel! **When it is preached in its purity, by those in whom the purpose of God is being worked out, there is no known limit of its influence.** Former occultists have been known to at once

abandon their views and burn their books of curious arts (Acts 19:19). If a whole city of considerable size could repent when hearing a message of doom (Jonah 3:5-10; Matt 12:41), what can take place when glad tidings of good things are insightfully declared?

In our time much of this power has been forfeited because men insist on attempting to mingle their thoughts with those of the Lord, then declaring their own conclusions as though they were true. Such

an admixture makes the word of God “of none effect” (Matt 15:6; Mk 7:13), rendering it powerless in the matter of salvation.

The salvational working of the Lord will only be found where the truth of the Gospel is being declared.

The marvelous benefits of salvation cannot be realized through the proclamation of a lie. That is why the Scriptures refer to “*the truth of the Gospel*” (Gal 2:5,14; Col 1:5). Furthermore, the effective witness of the

truth – referred to shining as lights (Matt 5:14; Phil 2:15), being the salt of the earth (Matt 5:13), and being the epistles of Christ (2 Cor 3:2-3) – is only possible when the truth of the Gospel is lived out. That involves both the death and life of Christ being made known in our bodies (2 Cor 4:10-11).

This was effectively done through Paul, as the Divine nature was made known on Melita through what he did. Here is an example of a city set on a hill.

HONORED BY THE PEOPLE

“¹⁰ Who also honored us with many honors; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary.”

When one considers this whole event without the Lord in mind, the possibilities for anything good taking place is almost nil.

- ⇒ All of the people on board the had survived a fierce storm on the sea.
- ⇒ No contention broke out among the passengers, even though there came a time when supplies were sparse, and the possibility of escaping by a small ship was set before them.
- ⇒ Anarchy did not break out because they found themselves in a physically impossible situation because sound advise had not been honored.
- ⇒ Everyone survived the wreck of their vessel.
- ⇒ Everyone made it safely to shore.
- ⇒ Barbarous people confronted them, and even though they did not know who they were, they treated them considerately.
- ⇒ No one tried to exploit the stranded people.
- ⇒ Only one person was bitten by a viper, and he survived without any harm.
- ⇒ The islanders, and especially the chief of the island, did not leave them to find shelter for themselves.

⇒ No attempt was made to have the stranded group work out the cost of their food and supplies. It was all given to them.

The epitaph over the whole affair is stated in the words of Romans 8:28: “*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*” This was the particular lot of Paul, Luke, and Aristarchus. The rest also partook of the benefits because they were with the right

LIVING “loaded us with honors,” WEYMOUTH
 “They treated us royally,” MESSAGE and
 “showed us every respect and presented many gifts to us, honoring us with many honors.” AMPLIFIED

The word “honored” has the following lexical meaning: “honor which belongs or is shown to one: the honor of one who outranks others, pre-eminence . . . preciousness,” THAYER and “honor, reverence, respect; passive recognition . . . esteem.” FRIBERG

The word “honors” is translated

The idea is that the islanders placed a high value upon Paul and his fellows, and thus provided them with many things that were also assessed as having value.

person – Paul.

It is not without cause that it is written, “*So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me*” (Heb 13:6; Psa 56:4). Even as the record of the wayward Israelites is written “*for our admonition*” (1 Cor 10:11), to learn what to avoid, so this record is written to assure us of the care of the Lord for His own (1 Pet 5:7).

HONORED WITH MANY HONORS

“Who also honored us with many honors . . .” Other versions read, “honored us in many ways,” NKJV “honored us with many marks of respect,” NASB “bestowed many honors on us,” NRSV “presented many gifts to us,” RSV “gave us great honor,” BBE “heaped honors on us,” CJB “showed respect for us in many ways,” GWN “showered us with gifts,”

from a word that means, “assigning value to something or to a person considered as property.” FRIBERG

The idea is that the islanders placed a high value upon Paul and his fellows, and thus provided them with many things that were also assessed as having value.

In his letter to Timothy, Paul spoke of bestowing “**double honor**” on those elders who “*labored in the word and in the doctrine*” (1 Tim 5:17). The Amplified Bible reads, “*Let the elders who perform the duties of their office well be considered doubly worthy of honor [and of adequate financial support], especially those who labor faithfully in preaching and teaching.*” Paul also wrote to the Thessalonians, “*And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the*

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Lord, and admonish you; and to **esteem them very highly** in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves" (1 Thess 5:12-13). In other words, those faithful leaders who excel in preaching and teaching are not only to be respected, but provided with honors that are valuable in the sight of the giver as well as the receiver.

Our text provides us with an excellent example of this actually being done by the beneficiaries of Paul's ministry. The irony of it is that these people did not know the Lord, while some who did know Him failed to so honor Paul. As it is written, "Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, **no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only**" (Phil 4:15). By comparison, here is what he wrote to the Corinthians concerning his presence with them. "I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service. **And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself**" (2 Cor 11:8-9).

While Paul did not insist in

LIVING

There are at least two possibilities here.

- ⇨ They provided what was required to sustain the group during the three months of winter.
- ⇨ They provided what was required to complete the trip to Rome.

In my judgment both the needs for the three-month stay, and what was required to complete the trip to Rome are included. The fact that Luke adds, "when we departed," confirms that the latter needs were met. Although he makes no mention of their needs being met during the winter months, it seems to me that this is also included in the manner in which the natives honored them.

NECESSARY USES

The Scriptures speak of daily needs as "necessary uses," which refers to food, shelter, and clothing.

The Lord Jesus Speaks

Jesus told His disciples not to fret about these needs: "Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye

gather in our increase: then I will command My blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years" (Lev 25:21). He also confirmed this in the sending of daily manna for the people, and commanding water to flow from the flinty rock (Deut 8:3,16; Psa 114:8).

It was not that Israel did nothing, or was not industrious during their journey through their wilderness. They still had to care for their children and their livestock. They had take down the whole camp every time the cloud moved, and set it up when the cloud stopped. However, God taught them that what they gained really came from Him, not from their labors.

Sometimes God would let the Israelites work hard, then put their money into a bag with holes (Hag 1:6). Other times, after toiling in planting and cultivating their crops, their enemies either destroyed them, or took the harvest for themselves (Lev 26:16; Mal 3:11). Other times, when the Lord was displeased with Israel, their seed rotted in the ground, never producing fruit (Joel 1:17). There were even times when insects were sent to destroy their crops (Amos 4:9).

Apostolic Doctrine

The saints are reminded, "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and **be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee**" (Heb 13:5).

Paul wrote to Timothy, "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (1 Tim 6:6-8).

As a personal testimony to the glorious effect of contentment, Paul wrote, "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil 4:11-13). Precious few people know "how to abound," for an excessive amount of money and resources has destroyed many a soul. Others do not know how to "be abased," when they do not appear to have enough, and resources are sparse.

The point is that provisions for the sustenance of life are **not** to be taken for

While Paul did not insist in receiving such support, choosing rather to preach among them "without charge," the miserable response that some churches yielded toward Paul places them in a rank that is lower than the response of the heathen from Melita.

receiving such support, choosing rather to preach among them "without charge," the miserable response that some churches yielded toward Paul places them in a rank that is lower than the response of the heathen from Melita.

AND WHEN WE DEPARTED

". . . and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary." Other versions read, "they supplied us with all we needed,"^{NASB} "they put on board all the provisions we needed,"^{NRSV} "they made presents to us of what should minister to our wants,"^{DARBY} "supplied us with everything we would need for the trip,"^{NLT} and "they provided and put on [board our ship] everything we needed."

shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" (Matt 6:25). And again, "Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" (Matt 6:31). And again, "And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment" (Luke 12:22-23).

Jesus spoke against the backdrop of certain commitments God made to Israel. "And if ye shall say, What shall we eat the seventh year? behold, we shall not sow, nor

granted, as though they were strictly owing to man's productivity. In the text before us, two hundred and seventy-six people needed to be sustained for three months on the island of Melita, and for the duration of the trip to Rome. God brought them to a distant island, where He commanded the blessing upon them through a barbarous people.

Necessary Uses

Believers are reminded to be as industrious as is possible, without mitigating their fellowship with Christ. Paul wrote to Titus about this matter. *"Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive*

lives"^{NIV} (Titus 3:14).

Some people labor for luxuries, and in the process starve their souls. They plan for a lucrative career without giving due regard to their spiritual needs. I am careful to say that having more than enough is not of itself wrong. Nevertheless, those who are in such a case are exhorted to use their resources in a godly manner. *"Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good*

foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed"^{NASB} (1 Tim 6:17-19).

Every believer is to *"lay hold on eternal life"* (1 Tim 6:12). **Those, however, who have an abundance, must extend themselves to do so**, overcoming covetousness, and using their resources to *"do good,"* being *"generous to share."* This is not a common word in our time.

We have a noble example of this kind of sharing in our text, both by the governor of the island, and its citizens. In this case, the sharing was done without an exhortation to do so.

AFTER THREE MONTHS THEY DEPARTED

"¹¹ And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux."

AFTER THREE MONTHS

"And after three months . . ."

There are at least five other records of a three month period in Scripture.

- ⇒ The ark of the covenant was kept in the house of Obedom for three months, during which the Lord blessed his house (2 Sam 6:11; 1 Chron 13:14).
- ⇒ Mary, the mother of Jesus, spent three months with Elizabeth, until the time of the birth of John the Baptist (Lk 1:56).
- ⇒ After Moses was born, he remained in his father's house for three months (Ex 2:2; Acts 7:20; Heb 11:23).
- ⇒ Paul reasoned in the synagogue of Ephesus for three months, then, because of the hardness of the Jews taking the disciples and removing to the school of Tyrannus (Acts 19:8-9).
- ⇒ Paul spent three months in Greece after going over the region of Macedonia (Acts 20:3).

The three months of our text was the time of winter, when the ships did not go out to sea (Acts 27:12).

We are given no information of the

activities taking place during This period of time. Some kind of communication with the people continued, for they loaded necessary supplies for the travelers in the ship of departure. Perhaps the sick and diseased were continually coming to Paul from

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Melita, then, was a kind of stopover for ships sailing to Italy. How many ships were there is not known. It ought to be noted that Julius was alert to the circumstances of the island, always seeking to carry out his responsibilities in a timely manner.

various parts of the island. However, I find it difficult to believe that Paul was idle during this period of time. There is no record of him preaching on the island, although I do not find it difficult to think of him doing so.

We learn from this that there are details that do not need to be known. O, that there was more wisdom among professing Christians on the matter of knowing what to report and what not to report.

WE DEPARTED IN A SHIP OF ALEXANDRIA

" . . . we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle . . ." Other versions read, *"an Alexandrian ship . . . which had wintered at the island,"*^{NKJV} and *"a ship which had wintered in the island, an Alexandrian ship."*^{AMPLIFIED}

in a timely manner. Sometime during the three months they were on the island, Julius had learned of this ship, and made arrangements to transport the passengers for which he was responsible to Italy.

This must have been a sizeable ship to have taken on board two hundred and seventy-six additional passengers, in addition to the supplies that were loaded by the natives of the island.

WHOSE SIGN WAS CASTOR AND POLLUX

" . . . whose sign was Castor and Pollux." Other versions read, *"Whose figurehead was The Twin Brothers,"*^{NKJV} *"with the figurehead of the twin gods Castor and Pollux,"*^{NIV} *"under the sign of the Dioscuri,"*^{BBE} *"called "Twin Gods,"*^{CJB} *"with*

the Dioscuri for its ensign,"^{DARBY} "whose badge was Castor and Pollux,"^{GENEVA} "had the gods Castor and Pollux carved on its front,"^{GWN} "It was three months after the shipwreck before we set sail again, and this time it was in The Twin Brothers of Alexandria,"^{LIVING} "an Alexandrian vessel, called the 'Twin Brothers,'"^{WEYMOUTH} "an Alexandrian ship named The Twin Brothers,"^{WILLIAMS} "an Alexandrian marked by the ensign Dioscuri,"^{ABP} "The ship was from Alexandria in Egypt and was known as 'The Twin Gods,'"^{CEV} and "The ship had a carved Gemini for its figurehead: 'the Heavenly Twins.'"^{MESSAGE}

I have taken the time to list the various translations of this verse in order to confirm the liberty translators have taken with the text. **The plethora of Bible versions reflects the state of the modern church – divided, and not seeing the Scriptures alike.** Of old time, it was easier for men to at least agree on what the Scriptures said. These days it is well nigh impossible for such agreement to be had. At least ancient scribes took care to relate what was said in the text, preserving the various expressions with which believers had become accustomed. But this is not at all philosophy of modern translators. Many of them have actually reshaped the text, even leaving out certain texts in the name of scholarship.

THE SHIP'S SIGN

Whose sign was The Twin Brothers (Δίσκουροι, Latin the constellation *Gemini*). The twin sons of Jupiter and Leda, Castor and Pollux, brothers of Helena ("fratres Helenis, lucida sidera," Horace, 'Ode,' 1:3, 2), were called by the Greeks *Dioscuri*, the sons of Jove. It was their special office to assist sailors in danger of shipwreck. Hence Horace, in the ode just quoted, prays that Castor and Pollux, in conjunction with other deities, would carry the ship in which Virgil sailed safe to Attica. And in Ode 12:27, etc., he describes the subsidence of the storm, and the calming of the waves, at the appearance of the twin stars, of Leda's sons. It was, therefore, very natural to have the Dioscuri for the *παράσημον*, the sign of the ship. Every ancient ship had a *παράσημον*, "a painted or carved representation of the *sign* which furnished its name on the prow, and at the stern a similar one of their tutelary deity."

This is not the place to engage in an apologetic for the nature of Scripture translation. However, suffice it to say, men have not been freed to manipulate the text of Scripture, or to in any way change what men have been accustomed to reading. It is the

business of preachers and teachers to expound the Word, elaborating on the proper meaning of the text, integrating it with the rest of Scripture, and showing how it reveals the nature and purpose of God, and how it bears upon the testimony of Jesus. All of this requires a knowledge of the text itself that is common among believers.

The Philosophy of Scripture Translation

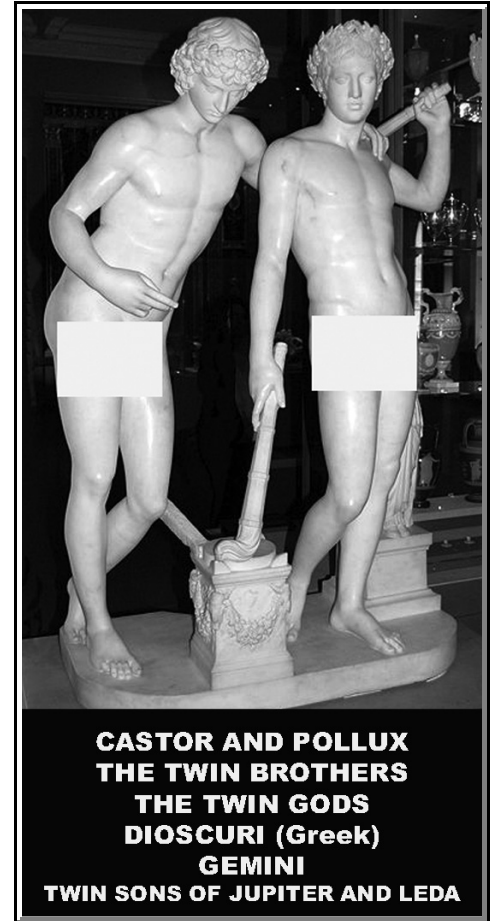
This reflects my own understanding of this matter. Yet, I feel compelled to share it, for I think there is far too much confusion on this issue. **No translation of Scripture is to be an interpretation of the Scriptures themselves.** The proper translation of Scripture is to project what is said, not what is intended by what is said. It is precisely at this point that many versions of the Bible fall to the ground. They attempt to project the meaning of the text rather than the affirmation of the text – and there is great difference between the two.

A proper translation of the Bible can only be done by those who have a wide scope of knowledge. Among the things that must be known are:

- ⇒ The language of the original text.
- ⇒ The best and most precise form of the language into which it is translated.
- ⇒ A working knowledge of the Scriptures themselves.
- ⇒ An understanding of God and His eternal purpose.
- ⇒ The Divine intention of the Scriptures.

Where there are alternative meanings to words, the definition that best suites the rest of Scripture, the nature of God, and the revealed intention of Scripture must be chosen. In my judgment there was a greater awareness of matters of this sort in earlier years. Today there is a sort of pseudo-scholarship that appears to have dictated the compilation of many Bible versions. I do not believe such translations have been driven by either the awareness of God, and insight into the divinely appointed needs of the people of God.

The "*sign*," or figurehead, that was on this ship was an image of Castor and Pollux, the mythical twin gods who were purported to be twin sons of Jupiter and Leda. According to the times, these were special gods who were devoted to protecting sailors



who were in danger of shipwreck. In some way, carvings of metallic castings had been made of these figures, and were on the forepart of the ship.

SOMETHING TO BE SEEN

Here was a ship that carried an idol as its ensign. How is it that Paul did not raise an objection to this circumstance? Elsewhere Paul addressed the matter of purchasing something that had been devoted to an idol. There was, for example, meat sold in the market that had actually been offered to idols. What should the believer do? Paul wrote, "*Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience' sake*"^{NKJV} (1 Cor 10:25). It is understood that if the person knew it was offered to idols, he would not eat it – not because it was strictly unlawful, but because it was not expedient (1 Cor 10:23). If the meat was of an excellent quality, and the price was right, yet it was known that it was offered to idols, Paul adds, "*Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth*" (1 Cor 10:24). The believer is to consider how this will look to a weaker brother who still does not know there is only one God (1 Cor 8:1-7). This, of course, calls for spiritual sensitivity and alertness.

Paul then paints another scenario. In this one, a brother is invited to a feast where it is possible meat offered to idols would be served. Here is his counsel. *“If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that showed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof: conscience, I say, not*

thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man’s conscience?” (1 Cor 10:29).

In this text, Paul has already made known whom he serves – and it is not these idols (Acts 27:23). None of those traveling with him will conclude that he condones the idols of Castor and Pollux.

I have briefly dealt with this matter because there are believers who avoid

conducting business where unacceptable things are done. While no person can make a law for another in such matters, every person in Christ is responsible for conducting their lives so people will not be led to wrong conclusions about them. This is part of working out your own salvation with fear and trembling. You must be guided by your own conscience on the matter, and a spiritual alertness concerning how your actions will be viewed by others. This requires both faith and love.

CONCLUSION

In fifty-five verses (Acts 27:1-44; Acts 28:1-11), about four months have been summarized [“*The next day*” (27:3); “*The next day*” (27:18); “*Many days*” (27:7); “*many days*” (27:20); “*a day*” (27:29); “*fourteen days*” (27:33); “*three days*” (28:7); “*three months*” (28:11)]. **It should be noted that the Divine manner is to touch only briefly on incidentals, but elaborate upon this directly bearing upon His purpose.** Is good for the people of God to learn to assess their lives in such a manner. By so doing, the working of the Lord becomes more evident. Those who major on incidentals, and allow their attention to be drawn to things that do not directly bear upon their eternal destiny, will find it most difficult to detect the hand of the Lord in their lives.

One of the great jeopardies of our time is the penchant for trivia, incidentals,

and things that have little to do with seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matt 6:33). Things that, technically speaking, are not wrong can rob the soul of fundamental realities – like eternal life, fellowship with Christ, and growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. A person can become absorbed with making a living, getting an education, and obtaining conveniences. In the process, spiritual life bleeds away, affection for the things of God cools, and soon the individual hardly thinks of the Lord at all. It takes some kind of crisis to awaken the slumbering soul, and even then, the person may awaken with an improper attitude, perspective, and intention.

In this matter, spiritual focus is greatly to be sought and maintained. Like the record of Paul’s journey to Rome, the things that pertain to being brought to glory

must become our accent.

There really is no regimen or human discipline that can successfully maintain such a focus. **Rather, it is living by faith, walking in the Spirit, and pressing toward the mark that keeps the soul awake.** Continual exposure to the word of God and the fellowship of God’s people are indispensable to the maintenance of a proper focus – one that will sustain the soul, keep the heart tender, and enable good spiritual sight and hearing.

When we stand before the judgment seat of Christ, I do not doubt that our lives will be reviewed in the manner revealed in the Scriptural records of godly men and women. Key things will be shown that explain why men were steadfast, or why they fell by the wayside. Those who fell from grace (Gal 5:4) did so because they were diverted by lesser things.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 10/22/10. We will continue our current series of lessons on the book of Acts. The one hundredth and sixth lesson will cover verses 12 through 22 of the twenty-eighth chapter: “PAUL ARRIVES IN ROME” On the last leg of the journey more brethren were found, and Paul and company spent seven days with them, then advancing to Rome. Hearing that Paul was on his way, some brethren came to meet them, traveling as far as Appii Forum. Upon seeing them, Paul *“thanked God and took courage.”* Upon arriving in Rome, Paul was delivered to the captain of the guard, who graciously allowed him to *“dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.”* Paul then called the chief of the Jews together and spoke to them. These Jews acknowledged they had heard of him, yet wanted to hear more about the matter. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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THE WORD OF TRUTH FELLOWSHIP

WORD OF TRUTH FELLOWSHIP Website: <http://wotruth.com/wotf/wotindex.htm>

A place where believers can meet, fellowship, be edified, and express themselves.

Additional Website for Word of Truth Fellowship: <http://www.forministry.com/USMOINDPTWOTFW>

WORD OF TRUTH Website: <http://wotruth.com>

BROTHER BLAKEY'S ON-LINE COMMENTARIES

COMMENTARY on Nehemiah: <http://wotruth.com/nehindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on Daniel: <http://wotruth.com/Daniel.htm>

COMMENTARY on Hosea: <http://wotruth.com/hoseaindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on Romans: <http://wotruth.com/Romans.htm>

COMMENTARY on Second Corinthians: <http://wotruth.com/2Corinthians.htm>

COMMENTARY on Philippians: <http://wotruth.com/philippiansdindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on Colossians: <http://wotruth.com/Colossians.htm>

COMMENTARY on First Thessalonians: <http://wotruth.com/1stthessindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on Second Thessalonians: <http://wotruth.com/2ndthessindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on Hebrews: <http://wotruth.com/hebindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on First Peter: <http://wotruth.com/1stpetindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on First John: <http://wotruth.com/1stjohnindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on Revelation: <http://wotruth.com/revelationindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on Mark: <http://wotruth.com/Mark.htm>

COMMENTARY on Titus: <http://wotruth.com/Titus.htm>

COMMENTARY on Acts: <http://wotruth.com/Acts.htm>

COMMENTARY on Malachi: <http://wotruth.com/Malachi.htm>

COMMENTARY on Galatians: <http://wotruth.com/Galatiansindex-new.htm>

PARTICIPATING BROTHERS AND SISTERS

A DESCRIPTION OF THE VARIOUS MINISTRIES DURING OUR GATHERINGS

"Openings and Introductions" = 7-10 minute exposition of truth to promote spiritual focus; "Lead Singing" – AM Songs selected by Leader, PM Songs Lead in favorites by the brethren; "Calling" = 7-10 minute exposition of truth designed to provoke disciplined thought; "Sermon" = 45 minute exposition of the things of God as revealed in Scripture; "Exhortation" = 5-8 minute challenge to act upon the truth we have heard; "Table Meditation" = 8-12 minute exposition of matters relating to Christ's role in salvation; "Lead Scripture shower" = Leading of the quoting/reading of Scripture without comment; "Lead prayer session" = Presentation of three matters for prayer that are taken from the Word of God; "Lead Intercessory Prayer" = A time of focused prayers for personal needs; "Closing Scripture/Benediction" – Closing of the AM Gathering

SPEAKING/LEADING/MINISTERING IN THE ASSEMBLY

The Word of Truth Fellowship, Joplin, MO

DURING SEPTEMBER, 2010

1. *Blakely, Given O.* (PM Sermon, PM Sermon).
2. *Blakely, Jonathan* (AM Table Meditation, AM Calling, PM Table Meditation, PM Exhortation).
3. *Blakely, June* (Lead PM Prayer Session, AM Class, Lead PM Singing).
4. *Blakely, Mattie* (Lead PM Singing, PM Introduction).
5. *Blakely, Michael* (AM Opening Word, AM Exhortation, AM Class, PM Sermon).
6. *Blakely, Michele* (Play Piano, Lead Scripture Shower).
7. *Cobb, Matthew* (AM Calling, AM Table Meditation).
8. *Cobb, Nicole* (Lead Scripture Shower).
9. *Cobb, Robert* (AM Exhortation, AM Table Meditation, PM Sermon).
10. *Dill, Sarah* (Closing Scripture/Benediction, PM Table Meditation)
11. *Hutchcraft, Aaron* (AM Class, AM Exhortation, AMN Table Meditation, PM Introduction, PM Exhortation).
12. *Hutchcraft, Barbara* (Lead AM Singing, AM Opening Word. Lead PM Singing).
13. *Hutchcraft, Debbie* (Lead Scripture Shower, Lead AM Singing).
14. *Hutchcraft, Gene* (Lead PM Intercessory Prayer, AM Sermon, PM Exhortation. PM Introduction, PM Exhortation).
15. *Hutchcraft, Judah* (Final Scripture/Benediction, Read PM Sermon Text, Introduction to PM Sermon, Read PM Sermon Text).
16. *Lizcano, Antonio* (Closing Scripture/Benediction).
17. *Murphy, Mariah* (Special Piano Numbers for PM Message,).
18. *Murphy, Micaela* (Read PM Sermon Text).
19. *Parker, Melissa* (AM Calling, PM Introduction).
20. *Parker, Tony* (AM Opening Word, AM Sermon, PM Table Meditation).
21. *Sims, Annie* (Lead Scripture Shower).
22. *Sims, Baylie* (Read AM Sermon Text).
23. *Sims Girls–Annie, Hannah, Rachel* (Read AM Sermon Text).
24. *Sims, Ricky* (AM Sermon, AM Class, AM Exhortation, PM Table Meditation).
25. *Sims, Tasha* (Lead AM Singing, Lead AM Singing, Lead PM Singing).
26. *Williams, Jeremy* (AM Calling, AM Sermon).
27. *Williams, Nichole* (AM Opening Word).
28. *Williams, Logan* (Play AM/PM Lord's Table Interlude, Read AM Sermon Text, Introduction to PM Sermon).
29. *Williams, Sydney* (Closing Prayer/Benediction, AM Sermon Text, AM Introduction to Sermon).
30. *Preparing Lord's Supper* (Various sisters).

THE BODY OF CHRIST

It is a fact: "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him" (1 Cor 12:18). He did not set them in the home, but "in the body." He did not place them in society, but "in the body." They are functioning members of the body who fill necessary functions – edifying roles in the solemn assembly (1 Cor 12:19-27). The functioning value and ministry of "the body" is realized when it is "together," not when the people are separated. The ministry of each member is determined by their faith – "a measure of faith" that has been given to them in order to the "profit" of the entire body (Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:7). This is how the Lord has put together "the church, which is His body" (Eph 1:22-23). We make no apologies for the ministry of the entire body – publicly, in the assembly, and in order to the edification of the saints. This is all done in an orderly manner, with due thoughtfulness and regard for those who are in Christ Jesus, and who, in faithfulness to God who gave these various abilities. Our assemblies are designed to allow for the various expressions and insightful responses of all who are of honest and good heart, have faith, and are in, and living for, the Lord Jesus.

The events taking place on Melita confirm that God's purpose drove this entire experience– by Given O. Blakely